

# Documentation of Zero Waste @ The Munich Climate Conference 2051

In this document, we will show you what is important to be considered when organising an event with special regard on zero waste. To get an impression for the practical implementation of zero waste at your event, we wrote about our experiences at The Munich Climate Conference 2051.

## 1. Introduction

First, we want to explain why waste prevention at events is so important.

Waste prevention saves resources

Since our earth's resources are limited, it makes sense to use them as carefully and sparingly as possible. Both with the products themselves, so that they are used for as long as possible, and with the things that have to be thrown away. When it comes to waste, it is important that we try to keep resources in the cycle and not simply burn them. In other words, we want to shift from a linear economy to a circular economy.

Large amounts of waste at events

Usually, the products at events are only for short usage. They are often thrown away after only one use as they were purchased for this one purpose only. Since they are used only for a short time, the materials do not have to be of good quality. Often, most things at events are purchased new. This generates a lot of packaging waste, especially plastic waste. Studies show that plastic packaging waste has doubled from 1998 to 2018. High time to do something!

The 5 R's of Zero Waste

We recommend paying attention to the 5 R's of Zero Waste and using them for an overall guideline:

### REFUSE

Do not take on what you don't really want and need.

### REDUCE

Buy only what you really need.

### REUSE

Reuse instead of throwing away and reusable is always preferable to single-use products.

### RECYCLE

What we cannot reuse should be recycled, because often "waste" contains many valuable materials.

### ROT

All organic waste should be disposed of in the garbage can provided for this purpose, so that the nutrients contained in it are kept in the cycle.

## The 5 R's of Zero Waste

REFUSE

REDUCE

REUSE

RECYCLE

ROT



Zero Waste means a minimum of waste

Overall, it is important that we try to reduce waste to a minimum. It's not about producing no more waste at all, although that's what the term Zero Waste suggests. Zero Waste is utopia, but unrealistic at the current time. It is much more about dealing with the topic in the first instance and making people aware of the points at which they produce a lot of waste and can possibly cut down on it. We don't want anyone to flagellate themselves or not even start dealing with it because they think they wouldn't be able to completely avoid waste anyway.

Goal of this documentation

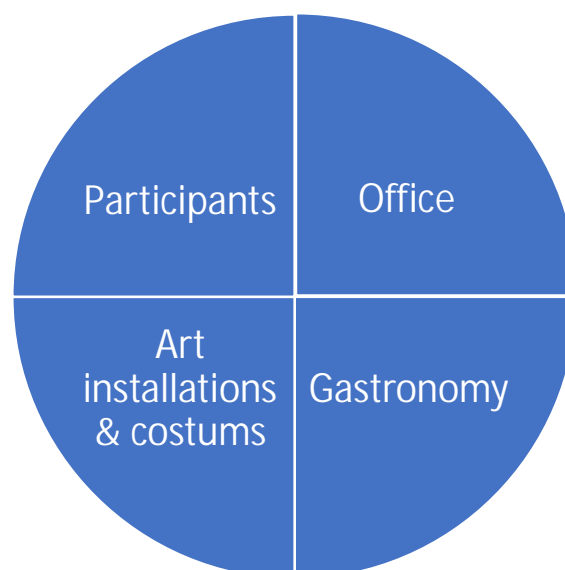
With this guideline we want to give others an orientation on what is important when focussing at zero waste at an event. This document is intended to help other organizers meet the challenges more easily than we did. Moreover, it could be for (municipal) funders. They can use it when talking to applicants for grants or organizers of events.

It is important to say that our work is not perfect at all. It was a first try to get an insight into the waste perspective at an event as The Munich Climate Conference 2051. We would change many things if we would do it again. But this is not the point. We want to share our experiences. What was the challenge? What did we achieve and where did we fail? We do not want to write another greenwashing report. We are convinced that a transformation is only possible when we honestly face this points. We will keep this document as a „living document“. This means, that we keep it open to adapt this document again and again and to feed it with new findings.

## 2. Our efforts at The Munich Climate Conference 2051

The 4 fields of action

For The Munich Climate Conference 2051, we identified four areas of action where waste is generated and took a closer look at them.



What we did is to have a look on the status quo. We asked the responsible people of every field which products they use and how much waste is created. Then, we put all data in a list to get an overview of the waste positions. There are some examples of waste positions for every field:

1. Participants (online and offline)

Bottles, food packaging, sanitary products, face masks

2. Office

Prints, coffee, pens, cigarettes

3. Gastronomy

Food waste, (take away) packaging, napkins, straws

4. Art installations and costumes

Wood, window foil, technical devices, cotton fabrics, tape

In the next step we developed sustainable measures for every waste position and gave the results back to the people to give them the chance to switch to a more sustainable way. Then we wanted to calculate the potential of waste savings that arises from the difference between the conventional and sustainable alternative. Read now what worked and what challenges we had in every field of action.

#### Art installations

First, we talked to the artists who made the installations at the event location and the costumes. We made a list of all the things they needed and researched sustainable alternatives for them. For example, we asked a garden company for roots (a waste product for them). We also contacted an animal shelter if they want to take the straw we do not use anymore after the event. Here it is important to think outside the box. Most people were open for new ways of doing. It is also good to have a look what local initiatives already exist. In Munich, for example, there is Treibgut, a place that sells used materials cheaply to artists. There are also places to go that lend out technical equipment (Kulturreferat).

The challenge in this field was that the artists' plans changed several times and at short term. Moreover, it was sometimes difficult to estimate how much material would be used. It was not possible to constantly adjust our results. At some point, time is pressing, so the quick solution may be to buy without looking at the waste.



#### Office

We wanted to find out how much waste is generated in the office for the preparation of the conference. We included the two main organizations and not all partners. It was difficult to estimate exactly how much of the waste was generated as part of this project when office staff work on multiple

projects. In addition, home office makes the calculation even more complicated. One can ask whether the plastic bottle a person uses all day is part of the waste generated as part of the project or in one's free time.

Nevertheless, we tried to list all the garbage items and estimated how much was consumed in each case. We then looked for sustainable, low-waste alternatives and then did the calculation of how much trash is produced with both options. Our sustainable proposals can save 77% trash in the office. Digitalization is the key to save a lot of unwanted waste. We have provided the sustainable proposals to the office, although the preparation of the project had already started. Nevertheless, we felt we met with a lot of understanding and we are sure that some suggestions were implemented. However, we did not do an evaluation of which sustainable measures were really introduced.

## Participants

First, we asked ourselves what kind of garbage we were considering in this field of action. Moreover, the complexity was that participants were both online and offline. To capture more data in this area, we also created a survey. Unfortunately, we received very little feedback here. Therefore, we used averages of how much tissues, food wrappers, etc. people use.

It is important to understand at this point that we can only make approximations. We also had to set limits on what falls within our scope of interest. Do we want to include travel and hotel stays of participants? However, it is not our first goal to find out the exact kilograms of waste, but we want to achieve a change in the thinking among the participants.

That's why we created a guide for participants as well as some signs that told participants on location to pay attention to waste avoidance. This guide was also adapted for digital participation.

## Gastro

The most difficult part was to cooperate with the restaurant. At the moment, they have to deal the pandemic and have a high fluctuation as usual in gastronomy. They do not have time and interest to think about waste prevention too much because it is not their prior issue and they already did a lot regarding this. Moreover, the measures to avoid waste are too expensive and difficult to implement.

We are planning to do a workshop with the head of the restaurant. This gives us a better view on where the saving potential is, what they already do and where are still possibilities to save waste. We will keep this document updated regarding the progress in the field of gastronomy. We want to emphasize here again that we are focusing on a long-term transformation and not with the exact calculation of the waste generated.



## Conclusion

### *Try it out!*

What we want to spread is, that it is not about doing the things perfect. We want you to try it out. Some things will work, some things not. And do not think that it has no impact. It is worth when you start with some little ideas and small changes.

### *Communication is the key*

Another very important point for all fields of action is communication. It is the key to involve every stakeholder from the beginning of the project. The seed of holding a zero waste event will grow from time to time in everybody's doing.

### *Know your boundaries*

It is crucial to know the system boundaries. Ask yourself where the big leverage is and do not get lost in trivialities. Sometimes it is not possible to get data or the waste position is too small and therefore is to be neglected.

### *Focus on the big leverage*

The focus should be on finding practical solutions for the big waste positions and not getting lost in details, such as calculating the right quantity for each waste position.

### *Accept your limits*

Getting good data is often limited. And do not be desperate if you cannot measure everything. Focus on the things you can do.

### *Think digital and choose reusables*

Digitalization can save a lot of waste in every office. Next to this, most of the products are available in reusable packaging or are available as reusables.

Overall, we hope that we do not need guidelines like this in 2051 since it has become natural to implement zero waste measures in every event organization.